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Bat Research

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Bat Research

By Patricia Freeman. Photos by Mike Forsberg

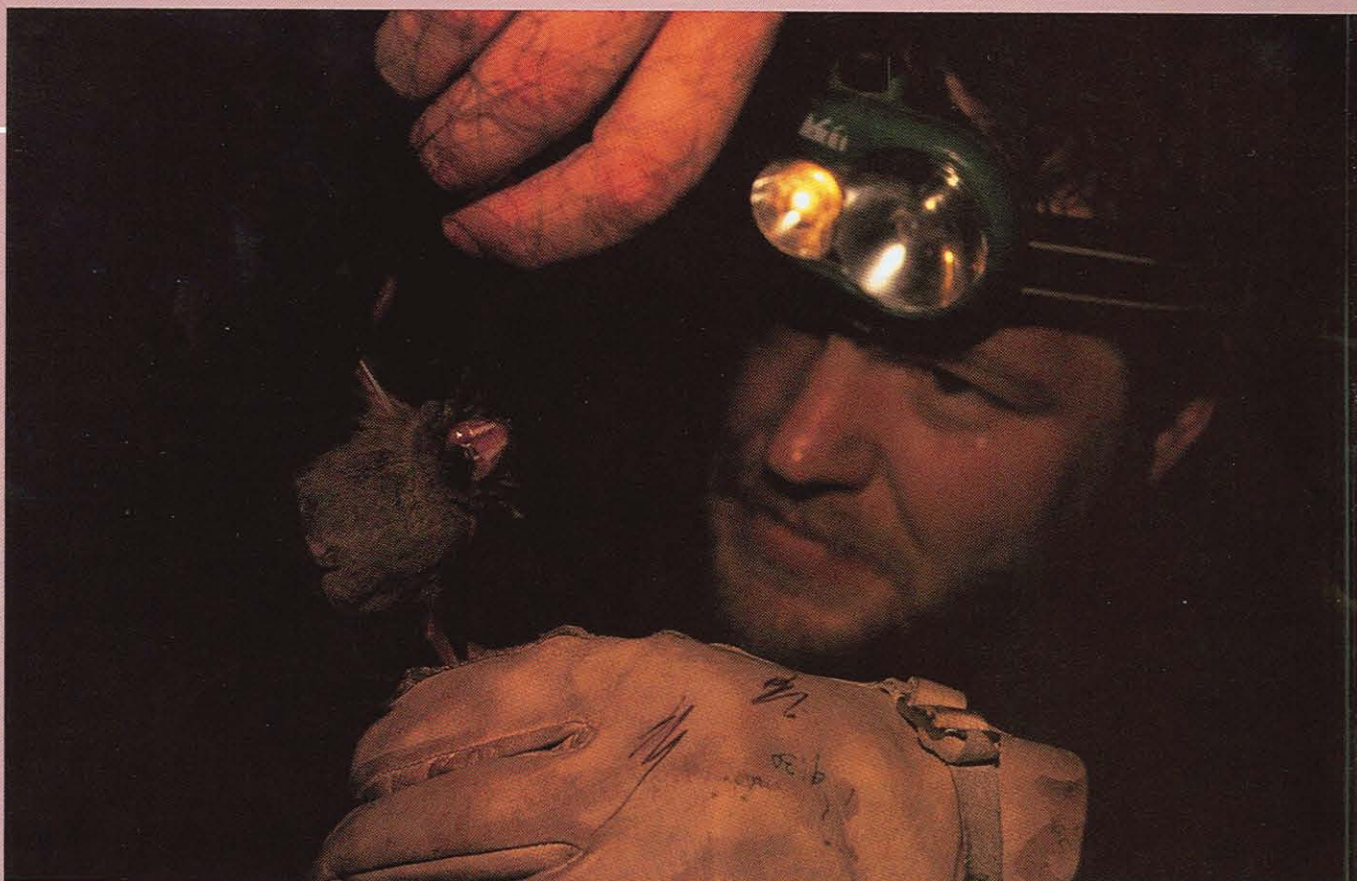


UNL researchers Russ Benedict and Sara Brant net bats on Salt Creek near Lincoln.

In our research, we capture bats with a net 50 to 200 feet long set up between poles. Usually we net over water to capture bats as they drink or forage. Sometimes we rig the net so it can be moved up and down like a sail between two secured lines or poles so we can sample what flies high among the trees. Netting helps us discover where each species occurs in the state, and we also can determine an individual's age, sex, reproductive condition and diet.



Netting bats helps researchers learn where bat species occur and determine their diet, age, sex and reproductive condition.

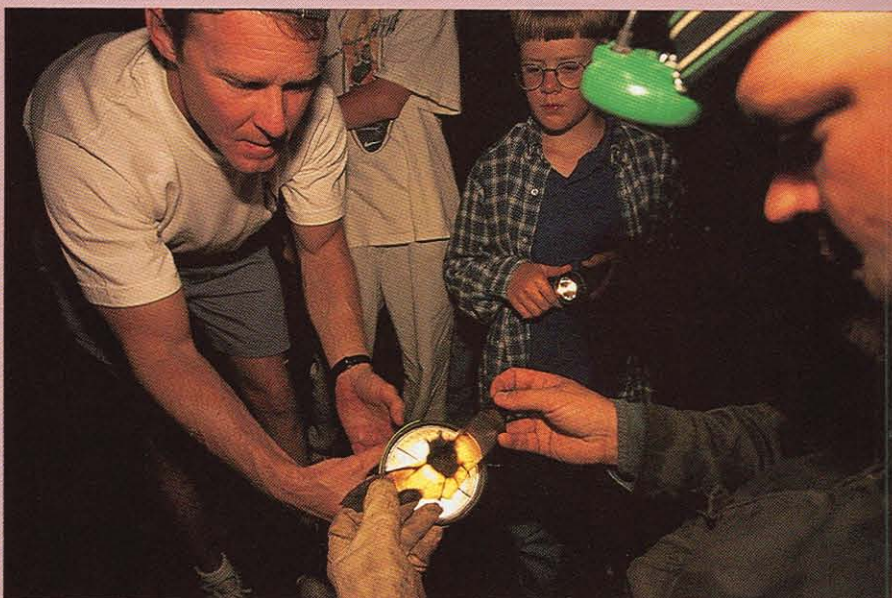


Bat researchers often set their nets across streams, corridors that bats, like this big brown, use as flyways.

We set one or several nets out at dusk and wait quietly. Some of us wear hip waders, others of us just get wet. We all wear head lamps and at least one glove.

When a bat hits the net we rush to it, hold it gently but securely with the gloved hand and remove the thin, hair-like net with the ungloved hand. We hurry because a bat can bounce out of the net or become thoroughly entangled and hard to remove. The longer it stays, the more it can damage itself and the net.

Bats are mysterious and fascinating. They are the only flying mammals, they have sophisticated navigation, they have incredible ears and faces, they eat many kinds of insects including agricultural pests, they can have rabies, and they are difficult to capture.



Field trip participants examine the delicate wing membrane of a captured bat.

For more information about bats, see "America's Neighborhood Bats" by Merlin Tuttle, Bat Conservation International, P.O. Box 162603, Austin, TX 78716. Simple bat house plans, also available from Bat Conservation International, are reproduced in the April 1991 issue of NEBRASKAland Magazine.